EDU 402

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Discipline with Dignity

Discipline with Dignity was created as a more effective way to handle discipline issues. The problem has been that rewards and punishment do not continue to be effective ways of handling disciplining students. When the rewards are gone there are no reasons for the student to continue the positive behavior, and students should not be punished but rather taught how to reach the goals we asking of them (Discipline). Basic principles that Discipline with Dignity focuses on are meant to be guidelines to make sure that students are being treated with respect when it comes to discipline in the classroom. These basic principles include: long-term behavioral change, not quick fixes, dealing with student behavior is part of the job, rules must make sense, be a model of what you expect, always treat students with dignity, responsibility is more important than obedience, stop doing ineffective things, and you can be fair without always having to treat everyone the same. Prevention, Action, and Resolution are the three hierarchical dimensions in Discipline with Dignity where teachers work on increasing their self-awareness, increasing student awareness, expressing true feelings, and discovering and recognizing alternatives or other models of discipline, motivating students to learn, establishing social contracts with the class, and implementing social contracts. The focus should be on positive interactions with the students and treating them with respect, and Discipline with Dignity should help us teachers get there (Discipline).

It was obvious to some that there needed to be a change in how students were being disciplined at school. The unwanted behaviors needed to stop so that students could focus on gaining knowledge and excelling in their academic performances (Matera). In her book, *Effective Classroom Management: Models and Strategies for Today's Classrooms,* Carlette Jackson Hardin wrote, “For over twenty years, Allen Mendler and Richard Curwin have stressed that a ‘one size fits all’ policy for classroom management is ineffective and inherently unfair. After writing their first book *The Discipline Book* in 1980, Curwin and Mendler gained national recognition with the publication of *Discipline with Dignity* in 1988.” These two men have continued to write books and give talks about the need for Discipline with Dignity in schools with the hope that someday all students will be treated with respect and that teachers will continue to tailor their classroom management and lessons for each student.

The issue of Discipline with Dignity in the classroom relates back to the educational experience because it can be a strong way of increasing engagement in classes. For example, the students who continually act out my find this more respectful disciplinary action effective. Plus, Discipline with Dignity relates the discipline back to the specifics of the rule broken in the hopes that students will permanently change their behavior, rather than temporarily putting them in detention. This theory could potentially make detentions and other forms of discipline completely obsolete. The various philosophical ideals view this method very differently.

Since Idealists strongly believe in the power of reasoning, I think they would enjoy the Discipline with Dignity approach of explaining to students why their behavior is unacceptable. Idealists have the overarching belief that everyone can reach their fullest potential. Realists, on the other hand, would not use Discipline with Dignity. Realists tend to have the idea that without strong discipline, the classroom would turn to anarchy. Realists tend to view the world through the opposite lense of idealists; since idealists focus on the positive potential, Realists would focus on the negative. Pragmatists are a little more complicated. Pragmatists would likely use this model, since their dominant beliefs regard how things are constantly changing. This change would also occur in school rules. Existentialists would hate Discipline with Dignity. Discipline with Dignity is based on the idea that teachers can predict the actions of their students, while Existentialists believe this objectifies the students. Educators must decide for themselves which philosophy they will follow.

Discipline with Dignity would be useful for our individual philosophies. It is seen as a way to reach our goals of being affective educators. The system allows for appropriate discipline, and since the students are included in decision making it becomes student based. Using this to create a safe and respectful learning environment will give them a voice and make the classroom environment safe for learning and asking questions. It will also allow for good relationships with students where they truly feel cared for. Being a good role model and understanding students and how they act and react inside and outside of the classroom can be achieved with Discipline with Dignity.

Discipline with Dignity allows educators and administration ways in which to discipline students without having to take away from class time. This means they will be spending less time dealing with behavioral issues and more time on instruction. This approach will require teacher and students’ time to help establish a set of guidelines and rules that will impact their class as a whole. This means some class time at the beginning will need to be spent on explaining and setting up these guidelines and consequential actions. Though it takes up some of one’s class, it is far less class time and students will be more apt to follow these guidelines because they were agreed upon in the classroom. In the grander scheme of things, this means one will be less apt to have to set aside class time for disruptions and misbehavior because the guidelines are clearly laid out and the consequences are explained and known by the students. By getting the students involved, they feel as though they are a part of the classroom, making them feel important. Many students make the assumption that their opinion does not matter and that their attitudes do not affect those around them. Students who generally have behavioral issues tend to feel as though no one cares about them, which in turn makes them act out more. By having them be a part and showing them they matter, this will hopefully make them think before having outbursts. Students just want to have a part in the learning process because they do not realize they are the most important part of the whole process. These students should be given a voice because they are the future and deserve a fair education.

Discipline with Dignity if implemented properly will have a very positive outcome on our classroom; however, it requires some work from us. In order to receive good behavior, we must take certain actions first. We must make students feel important and show them they matter to you and the class as a whole. Educators are expected to meet with administration, the board, and parents when it comes to implementing Discipline with Dignity into the classroom and school. These sources will come to an agreement then the teacher will enforce this after getting student input on the matter. The involvement in this program is superb, allowing all members of the community feel as though they are a part of the classroom. Students are an important part of the community and allowing them to get involved will have positive effects on the classroom. According to a newspaper article written by The Herald Sun in Durham, North Carolina, one can see the many benefits to the classrooms where this system has been implemented. Schools showed a decrease of 50% for discipline problems and having to discipline children (Rickard). In some secondary schools in North Carolina, there has been a “72-percent drop in the number of students sent to administrators with discipline problems” (Rickard). This has shown the positive effects it has on the classroom. It allows students the opportunity to be better behaved in the classroom. This is due to the fact that they have been given a voice in their education meaning that they are more apt to care about the class.

As teachers, we will be given the opportunity to implement such systems into our classroom. We believe after the research we have done and the evidence that has been discovered that this would be a positive addition to any class. It seems to have positive effects on the classroom increasing student attendance, good behavior, and learning. They are more apt to be engaged in the class. As teachers, we will have more time to focus on the classroom aspects and teaching students all we can instead of spending most of that time enforcing rules and disciplining students in negative ways. It will make our classrooms more enjoyable for all. This is such a positive system and as the educators we must set the example by constantly following the rules and guidelines set out by our class. If we do not abide by the rules then we too must deal with the repercussions and consequences of our actions. By working with our students, we will gain their respect and we all will work better as a team. By having similar guidelines with fellow educators, we will have more collaboration and aspects of our class to report back to fellow colleagues. When students do not abide by the rules they will in turn deal with the consequences of their actions as well. This will allow all equal power and show those students struggling that someone cares about them and their education. There will be a positive effect on both our students and ourselves when we implement the strategies of Discipline with Dignity in our class. Though there may be moments that may not always be pleasant for the majority of the time the effect on our classroom will be a positive one with a safe and respected learning environment.

There is a lot that can be gained from the concept of Discipline with Dignity. This method has its benefits; however much like most systems it has the potential to have flaws. In some ways, this could be construed as negative even though it is generally considered a positive aspect in the classroom. Yes, this method is good in many ways such as the fact that it creates a student based learning structure which is important to see in the school system. It creates equality in the classroom and makes the classroom a more comfortable atmosphere according to the studies. It is commonly leading to a decrease in discipline problems and an increase in student engagement in the class. Discipline with Dignity has the 12 step plan that is applicable to the classroom and beneficial for students and educators. This plan agrees with many teachers beliefs and allows students and teachers a large voice in the educational process. This helps to demonstrate the many positive aspects one can hope to gain by implementing this into his or her classroom. These are some of the ways in which this system illustrates our main goals as educators for our classroom.

        But just as students learn differently, they often have very different demeanors and ways in which they seek attention. For some, this type of discipline can have a positive outcome making them feel important and comfortable. Others may not take this seriously and continue to misbehave. As teachers, we need to be ready for this type of outcome as well. Though there is less potential for negative outcomes it is still possible due to the fact that students are given more opportunities. In some ways this is difficult because some students may push their limits or abuse their right of power. This shows those moments in which students will know the rules but feel because they had a part in making them that the rules are not as applicable to these students. This demonstrates the possibility for negative aspects to be presented due to this new system of discipline that we as educators do not hope for in our classroom.

**Works Cited**

Curvin, Richard L., and Allen N. Mendler. "Discipline with Dignity." *Stuff4educators.com*. Educators Educating Educators, n.d. Web.

This website gave a few hints on effective ways of using Discipline With Dignity in the classroom (i.e. ways to promote positive behavior rather than reprimanding negative behavior).

Curwin, Richard L., Allen N. Mendler, and Brian D. Mendler. *Discipline With Dignity*. 3rd ed.

Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008. Print.

This book gives a clear background on discipline while also introducing the reader to this concept of Discipline with Dignity. It is well written and does a wonderful job giving information and helpful resources for teachers.

Delisio, Ellen R. "Discipline With Dignity Stresses Positive Motivation." *Educationworld.com*. Education World, n.d. Web.

This article gives information regarding the groundwork for Discipline With Dignity, such as the psychological research that helped the founders develop this model.

"Discipline with Dignity." *Teacher Education Institute*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Oct. 2013.

This source included lesson plans that teachers can use to begin to implement Discipline with Dignity in their classrooms.

"Discipline With Dignity Stresses Positive Motivation." *Education World: The Educator's Best Friend*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Oct. 2013.

This article from a school administration provides an overview of the goals of Discipline with Dignity and provides many resources for books on the subject.

Gollnich, Donna M., Gene E. Hall, James A. Johnson, and Diann Musial. *Foundations of American Education*. 16th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2011. Print.

This textbook offered valuable insight into the various philosophies related to education.

GÜRCAN, Tuğba, and Esra TEKİN. "Discipline With Dignity." *Discipline With Dignity*. N.p., n.d. Web. 9 Oct. 2013.

This website included the basic principles for Discipline with Dignity and provided examples of how to use it in the classroom.

Jackson Hardin, Carlette. "Chapter 6 Discipline with Dignity." *Effective Classroom Management: Models and Strategies for Today's Classrooms*. Boston: Pearson, 2012. 101-18. *UCSB*. Web. 15 Oct. 2013.

This chapter went into detail about the classroom management behind Discipline with Dignity which included how to evaluate and create strategies for discipline.

Matera, Bryan D. "The Effects of Rewards and Punishments on Motivations of the Elementary School Student." Diss. 2009. *ProQuest* (2009): 1+. *Udini*. Web. 15 Oct. 2013.

This dissertation included why there needed to be a change to how students were being disciplined and why the old way was not working.

Mendler, Allen, and Brian Mendler. "What Tough Kids Need From Us." *Reclaiming Children & Youth* 19.1 (2010): 27-31. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 12 Oct. 2013.

This is a great article that allows one to understand a child who is chronically misbehave in the classroom and gives helpful strategies to fix the problems.

Murray, Ben. "Positive Discipline Reaps Retention." *Nursing Management* 34.6 (2003): 19. *Business Source Complete*. Web. 12 Oct. 2013.

This article was beneficial in giving a different point of view on discipline while also giving examples of how it has made a difference.

Rickard, Carolyn. "District Meeting to Discuss Discipline." *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*: 0. Nov 26 2007. *ProQuest.* Web. 12 Oct. 2013 .

This article gave many helpful statistics and information about implementing Discipline with Dignity into the classroom and gave examples of a school that has implemented this system and the results of doing so.